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CIA Role Was More Than Low-Level

We've caught the Central Intelligence Agency in another big lie. The spy agency, after some prodding, has admitted that it was involved in an investment firm in Honolulu that collapsed and cost hundreds of innocent investors millions of dollars.

But the CIA insisted that it was strictly a "low-level" involvement by a few employees, not something the big shots at the Langley headquarters knew about.

Does Stansfield Turner, then-director of the CIA, sound like a "low-level" connection? How about the sultan of Brunei, a Malaysian prince and assorted Filipino, Indonesian and Arab multimillionaires?

All these dignitaries had one thing in common: They were all chauffeured around Hawaii in the investment company's silver-and-black Cadillac limousine at the behest of the CIA.

My associates Indy Badhwar and Dale Van Atta interviewed the chauffeur, Franklin Kipilii, a descendant of Hawaiian royalty and a former highway patrolman, hotel detective and court bailiff, who now drives for the Tiffany Limousine Service.

Kipilii landed his job with the investment firm—Bishop, Baldwin, Rewald, Dillingham & Wong—by answering a newspaper ad. He said he was told straight off that BBRD&W had CIA connections. The firm's president, Ronald Rewald, now facing 100 criminal counts in connection with the company's collapse, warned him not to tell anyone about conversations he might overhear while driving VIPs around, Kipilii said.

At Christmastime 1980, Kipilii was pressed into

service for Adm. and Mrs. Turner, driving them from one airline terminal to another at the Honolulu airport. Kipilii said his boss, Rewald, gave him the chauffeuring assignment, telling him to get details from Jack Rardin, then the CIA station chief in Honolulu.

"I went to the airport with Mr. and Mrs. Rardin, who went in and came out with the dignitaries," Kipilii recalled. "The director was accompanied by an aide and two CIA bodyguards. I drove them around. They hooked up with Aloha Airlines and went to Maui to check on some property."

Turner has said he never met Rewald and knew nothing about his investment firm. But he confirmed details of the 1980 trip and remembered being met by the Rardins and riding in what he assumed was their limousine.

During his years as the chauffeur, Kipilii said, he drove dozens of CIA agents who worked for the firm or were visiting Honolulu. He drove Rewald to Hickam Air Force Base for a party at which Rewald was introduced to Vice President Bush as an "invaluable friend" of the CIA. Bush is a former CIA director.

Kipilii remembered attending a lavish Christmas party at the luxurious house Rewald bought from former Cambodian prime minister Lon Nol.

Among the passengers in the back of Kipilii's company limousine, he said, were Prince Saud Mohammed of the United Arab Emirates; the sultan of Brunei; Enrique Zobel, a Philippine banker and multimillionaire with close ties to President Ferdinand E. Marcos, and Indri Gautama, an Indonesian multimillionaire.